



# Change 2020

How Successful Leaders  
Drive Change Now

**notion**  
consulting

# Notion Consulting

interviewed **50** Fortune 500 executives and successful entrepreneurs about their business challenges and what it means to lead change in **2020**.

In the following pages, we'll highlight our "10 Key Takeaways" based on these conversations and share "pro tips" on what it takes to lead true organizational transformation.

# 10 Key Takeaways

1

## **RACE AGAINST PACE**

Winning in 2020 will require extraordinary speed and agility.

2

## **COST-CUTTING IS NOT TRANSFORMATION**

Transformation is about reinvention.

3

## **TOO MUCH TINKERING**

Too many leaders waste time 'tinkering' instead of driving transformation.

4

## **THE STRUGGLE IS REAL**

Change isn't easy, and it's just getting harder.

5

## **INVOLVEMENT = COMMITMENT**

People make or break change.

6

## **BE IN THE FUTURE & THE PRESENT AT THE SAME TIME**

Successful change leaders connect ideas with actions.

7

## **MAKE IT MEANINGFUL**

Stay motivated through purposeful connection and intellectual pursuits.

8

## **GO SLOW TO GO FAST**

Sometimes you need to take your foot off the gas to maintain momentum.

9

## **HUMILITY DRIVES GREATNESS**

Those who admit what they don't know and seek input from others, accomplish most.

10

## **REAL CHANGE REQUIRES MORE THAN HEARTS & MINDS**

Real change requires energy.



# 1

## RACE AGAINST PACE

*Winning in 2020 will require extraordinary speed and agility.*

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It's not just the volume and variety of pressures compelling leaders to change, it's the pace. Leaders feel that the need for speed is both overwhelming and critical to success.

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## Pressures Driving Change

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**41%**  
CONSUMER/  
CLIENT



**24%**  
TECHNOLOGY/  
DATA



**18%**  
MARKET/  
COMPETITION

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## In Their Own Words

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“Technology is driving the most change ... the pace of technology and business change has picked up significantly and is causing a much higher level of anxiety.”

“The Digital Age has brought about the need to respond faster and in different ways. It is driving companies to evolve quickly so they can survive in the increasingly competitive marketplace.”

“There’s more competition for the consumer’s time, and their wallet. The speed required to deliver what the consumer wants is increasingly intense.”

“We must keep our customers by creating (and constantly reinventing) a compelling offer.”



*Surround yourself with a team that embraces change and can take rapid action to drive growth.*



# 2

## COST-CUTTING IS NOT TRANSFORMATION

*Transformation is about reinvention.*

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Companies that equate cost-cutting with transformation end up with employees who distrust change initiatives. True transformation revitalizes an organization and its workforce.

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## Transformation

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42%

DEFINED TRANSFORMATION AS BIG, MAJOR AND DRAMATIC - AND A STEP TOWARD THE FUTURE



50%

INDICATED THAT SOME LEVEL OF INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE WAS A CRUCIAL MAKE-OR-BREAK ELEMENT OF A TRANSFORMATION

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## In Their Own Words

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“Transformation is a major change effort ... . It must be significant enough to be far reaching and deep feeling for everyone involved.”

“People seem to want to use the word ‘transform’ for every little thing ... Transformation requires a complete shift in the approach to what you’re doing. It’s a paradigm shift.”

“Too many leaders started using the word transformation when consulting companies were working with them on cost-cutting initiatives, but that’s not what a transformation is at all. Transformation is about invention - or reinvention.”

“Transformation is about letting go of the past, but also so much more about shaping what’s new.”



*Don't just focus on cost-cutting. You must also focus on inventing or reinventing something new and different.*



# 3

## TOO MUCH TINKERING

*Too many leaders waste time 'tinkering' instead of driving transformation.*

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Although most executives are investing in transformation, many have trouble getting lift or traction with those efforts. They make small tweaks but ultimately fail to shift mindsets, behaviors and energy.

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## A Common Mistake

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100%

HAVE EXPERIENCED A TRANSFORMATION EFFORT  
THAT TURNED TO TINKERING AND EVENTUALLY FAILED

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## In Their Own Words

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“Real change requires big leaps; disruption. But what I often see is organizations ... tinkering with little processes and failing to take big leaps or disrupt.”

“When you’re doing true transformation you need to change the whole infrastructure – it’s like gears in a clock, if you just tinker with one gear, you break the clock. You’ve got to adjust all the gears in order to keep things working.”

“[True transformation is] when you have either disrupted an industry OR you have taken a big giant step to disrupt your own organization.”

“I think too many CEOs and other senior executives are using the transformation word because they see the need for long-term change. However, they’re often under pressure to deliver short-term financial results and therefore back off from making major changes once the challenges get real.”

“Change can be painful - so sometimes people set out to make big changes and end up changing very little.”



*Mind your “say-do gap.” If you say you’re transforming, make sure you’re making an investment in big changes that will make a long-term difference.*



# 4

## THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

*Change isn't easy. And it's getting harder.*

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The three things leaders struggle with most are resistance from others, lack of opportunity to bring all their skills and interests to work, and resource constraints.

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## Biggest Challenges



**46%**  
RESISTANCE



**42%**  
LACK OF  
OPPORTUNITY



**22%**  
RESOURCE  
CONSTRAINTS

## In Their Own Words

“Shifting the status quo is one of the biggest challenges - you need to sell people on the ultimate benefit - [otherwise] there is an instant resistance.”

“The biggest challenge for any change is to get people outside of their comfort zone and to show them it is worth the investment.”

“I was not working to my full potential because some of my skills were not being utilized.”

“I was given this big transformation project and told it was important, but had no time or resources to focus on it.”

“There were just too many competing priorities. We set out to do bold, ambitious things but couldn’t say no to anything, and in the end we were overwhelmed with too many competing priorities.”



*Proactively take care of your change leaders -  
give them resources, remove obstacles and  
encourage them to bring their whole selves to work.*



5

# INVOLVEMENT = COMMITMENT

*People make or break change.*

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No change can happen without support from your people. And when your people are involved, they commit to a successful outcome.

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## *The Role People Play*

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# 100%

**BELIEVE PEOPLE CAN MAKE OR  
BREAK YOUR CHANGE EFFORTS.**

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## *In Their Own Words*

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“People commit when they feel heard, understood and considered.”

“The most powerful change happens when the vision is both ‘grass-roots’ and ‘top-down’ - when it comes from the people AND is supported by the executives.”

“People get on board when they understand their role in making the change happen.”

“Everyone wants to have a sense of purpose - and if they can find that in a change, it will go a long way to keeping them engaged and committed.”

“Sometimes it’s difficult to see the value in pausing to bring people on the journey, but it’s important for keeping things moving farther down the line.”



*Engage people in every step of the journey.*



# 6

## BE IN THE FUTURE & THE PRESENT AT THE SAME TIME

*Successful change leaders  
connect ideas with actions.*

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The most successful change leaders  
do three things really well:

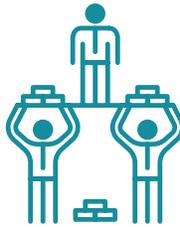
- 1: See the future,
  - 2: Lift the people around them, and
  - 3: Stay the course.
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## Things Great Change Leaders Do



**43%**  
SEE THE FUTURE



**37%**  
'LIFT' PEOPLE  
AROUND THEM



**21%**  
PERSONIFY  
GRIT

## In Their Own Words

“I don’t believe in the idea of ‘point of arrival.’ I am always thinking about how to evolve what we do and pushing my team to do the same.”

“What keeps me motivated? Every day a new challenge and a new opportunity to make an improvement. To me if I can help and contribute to our success, that gets me out of bed every day.”

“People like to follow you and be part of the vision if they feel like they understand you and you understand them.”

“I have courage and conviction and willingness to be wrong and take chances. Once I have an idea, I do the appropriate work and have a high degree of conviction...grit will carry you through people’s resistance along the way.”

“I have the ability to see the individual pieces of the jigsaw puzzle - the whole picture, and the purpose and value of each.”



*Rally people toward the future, but be realistic about where you are today and stay committed to your vision even if you need to pivot along the way.*



# 7

## MAKE IT MEANINGFUL

*Stay motivated through purposeful connection & intellectual pursuits.*

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They cherish any opportunity to connect with people, get bored without challenges, and are energized when they can see the difference they make in the lives of others.

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## Things That Keep Change Leaders Motivated



**43%**

ARE INSPIRED BY  
INTELLECTUAL  
CHALLENGE



**31%**

FIND PURPOSE IN  
CONNECTING WITH OTHERS  
IN A MEANINGFUL WAY

### In Their Own Words

“What motivates me: I like a complex challenge. I like to get things done. I really enjoy seeing people achieve success.”

“I am relentless about making things better. If I’m not making things better, I’m not in the right job and will look for something else.”

“I have an insatiable need to leave things in a better place than where I found them. I see opportunity to do this everywhere I go.”

“I see what needs to happen and what it takes to get people there, and I put in the time to do that.”

“I love helping people through change and seeing people accomplish great things during times of ambiguity and uncertainty.”



*Connect with others and  
challenge yourself intellectually.*



# 8

## GO SLOW TO GO FAST

*Sometimes you need to take your foot off the gas to maintain momentum.*

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They recognize when it's time to cut through the noise to push forward, and when it's time to listen and slow down.

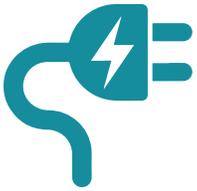
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## Managing the Pace

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**32%**

FOLLOW THE  
ENERGY



**21%**

ENGAGE WITH  
RESISTORS



**10%**

PAUSE FOR  
PERSPECTIVE

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## In Their Own Words

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“If your transformation isn’t a priority for your business - the ability to succeed could be really tough. I had to focus my energy in areas where I could make a difference.”

“Focus on ... day to day relationship building. Cross functional - internal and external - keeping others’ interests in mind and balancing that with the desire to win and the desire to keep your team.”

“Ask people what they think and listen to what they really say - whether they are validating or challenging. Communicate your concerns and needs very directly and see what the response is.”

“I go to people who believe in the change and preach to the choir so I can get re-energized and motivated to stay focused and engaged.”

“I understand the value of taking your time to have conversations and share messages, etc. You can move too fast and lose people if you don’t take the time to bring people along.”



*Make time and space to pause,  
reflect and meet people where they are.*



# 9

## HUMILITY DRIVES GREATNESS

*Those who admit what they don't know and seek input from others accomplish most.*

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Successful change leaders are comfortable accepting what they don't know and looking to others for challenge and insights.

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## Biggest Advice

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**47%**  
ASKED TO BE  
CHALLENGED  
& TRULY LISTEN



**35%**  
ADVISED LEADERS TO  
BE COMFORTABLE  
ADMITTING WHAT THEY  
DON'T KNOW



**17%**  
ENCOURAGED  
LEADERS TO BETTER  
BALANCE INDIVIDUAL  
STRENGTHS AND  
INTERESTS WITH  
GROUP OBJECTIVES

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## In Their Own Words

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“Set up an environment of safety - one in which everybody’s speaking up. Productive conflict is good.”

“It’s important to feel like you can always share what you are thinking and feeling - having a culture that enables open dialogue across all levels is critical.”

“As a leader ... if you are constantly talking and never listening, you are doing something wrong... . You need to recognize value in what employees bring to the table.”

“Focus on what you can control right now - find the thing you are going to solve today, this week, and stop wasting your time or energy on the things you can’t control.”

“Accommodate people's individual interests when driving toward group objectives and outcomes.”



*Be curious, ask questions,  
and admit what you don’t know.*



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# REAL CHANGE REQUIRES MORE THAN HEARTS & MINDS

*Real change requires energy.*

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To truly transform and grow, one must capture hearts and minds - and most importantly, drive positive energy to improve outcomes.

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## Success Factors

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**100%**

NOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF ENERGY AS A KEY FACTOR IN GAINING MOMENTUM TOWARD THE FUTURE



**28%**

ARTICULATED THE VALUE OF A CLEAR, OUTCOMES-FOCUSED, TANGIBLE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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## In Their Own Words

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“Change is not just about doing a bunch of new things – it’s about stopping old habits and creating energy around new ones.”

“Change requires you to change the minds of everyone involved. And really shift their energy toward the future.”

“Momentum comes about if the leader is able to articulate the change in a way that resonates. That leader needs to be clear on what the outcome should be and how the team will work together to achieve it.”

“If the CEO really owns the vision, [he or she] holds his or her direct reports accountable for delivering it, and enlists them as evangelists for the future.”

“The picture of the future needs to be practical - people must be able to see themselves in it if they are going to bring their energy to the table.”



*Be an energizer - one who imparts vitality and spirit to others.*



# SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

*True transformation in 2020 requires significant, sustained energy at every level. The strategies outlined in the four zones below will help energize your workforce and gain the traction needed for success. Leading this work isn't easy, but with the passion and collective power of your people driving your organizational change, you'll be amazed at what you can achieve together.*

## C-SUITE

Get your executives truly working together to drive toward one vision of the future.

## MAGIC MIDDLE

Empower your middle managers to translate the vision into the day-to-day experience with a combination of optimism and pragmatism.

## MANAGER-COACH

Equip your supervisors to engage employees to make a successful transition to tomorrow.

## FRONT LINE

Set clear expectations and encourage your employees to try new things and reinvent themselves along the way.



**Notion Consulting**  
**helps leaders imagine the**  
**future and guide people to it.**

With the right combination  
of organizational vision,  
leadership, talent, and  
engagement, our clients  
can tackle even the most  
complex challenges.

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consulting

[notionconsulting.com](http://notionconsulting.com)

[info@notionconsulting.com](mailto:info@notionconsulting.com)

 **in**  
[@notionconsulting](https://www.linkedin.com/company/notionconsulting)